



Review of '10 X 10/3 100 Architects. 10 Critics'

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I have always had a problem with compendiums. Even as a child, those boxes filled with just too many bits and pieces, were always a last resort on a wet day. Architectural publications abound with the strangest zoo like compendiums: pictorial frenzies of the new and fashionable. Publishers just seem to scoop up everything in the publicity path and rely solely on critics to make sense of this 'pick and mix' architecture. But even those critics gifted with Darwinian powers of observation and connective theory, are at times simply unable to thread together the impossible spectrum and diversity that is contemporary global architecture. All too often we are left with the heavy baggage of massive books, with banal and generic titles, that seek only to please everyone.

In this context Phaidon's 10x10 series is well known, and is now into the

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10 X 10/3
100 ARCHITECTS,
10 CRITICS
Phaidon



third volume. The format, simply the identification of 10 critics whose task it is to select ten architects each, to a total of 100. This new volume 10x10/3 is another diverse trawl through 'architectureland', but this time with lesser known critics as guides.

Earlier volumes identified the emergence of strong directions: the forces of the critic's particular tastes, theoretical trends or geographic and regional critical mass -such as in volume two which identified the scope of new Irish Architecture in a wider European context.

Much of the work illustrated in this new volume is relatively unfamiliar but seems to fall at times too easily into stereotype 'shaping' and surface obsessions. The approach of the 10x10 series has generally been not to repeat architects already featured in previous volumes -which clearly does limit the choice. But amidst the vast array of projects and names, some strong projects and work does emerge. D.F. MEX in Mexico with their simple articulated boxes for flats and fire stations illustrate a refreshing modern simplicity. The powerful work of Smiljan Radic in Chile moves between crafted wooden boxes that

are shrouded in copper to the Miesian Pite House bedded into the rock at the edge of the sea. His work is unpredictable, beautifully detailed and deserves wider recognition.

BIG's amazing Mountain Dwellings in Denmark is almost lost and underplayed in the abundance of images in the book, while CJ Lim/Studio 8's small installation for the V&A takes a full two page spread, showing small projects can and should warrant as much attention as larger ones. Raumlaborberlin's enjoyable inhabitable bubbles rerun some of the 60's ideas, while REX - the American spin off from OMA's office- look ready to build some interesting projects.

Having travelled page after page through this landscape of over abundant image and promotional blurb, the end is signalled by 10 short 'references' - short texts by each of the critics. The best of these is by Joseph Grima- the New York based architect and director of Storefront Gallery. He identifies the work of the Belgian architect Juliaan Lampens and describes how amidst the difficult realities, economic pressures and often humdrum commissions that he and most architects experience, produced a radical house. It went relatively ▶





► unnoticed at the time (1967), and still is, but its dynamic sense of space, craft and modernity is of timeless value. This house for me a revelation in its quality, made me want to know more -which I could not say about many of the contemporary projects in the book. It signals the importance of architecture beyond fashion and history. This 'reference' to the conditions, clients and context that shape architecture is an important sounding amidst what is an overwhelming image based publication. Perhaps there is a lesson here for the next 10x10? Could future volumes marry new projects with favourite older ones, reflecting on their use and value as they age?

But what sense, if any, are we to make of the overall projects or for that matter how they are presented, in this book. Architecture being so dependant on context and programme is stripped of its essential qualities when reduced to pictorial compendiums. Less would definitely be more if the fullness of projects were to be described and given space to enjoy them. Sometimes a plan, a detail and a sketch are enough when accompanied by a considered text. This would save us from those endless super real and uncanny computer visualisations that condemn the building process into a digital artificial lifelessness. Many of

the featured architects show just too many images and projects for the small number of pages they are given -100 architects, each with five or so projects on show. The effect is that of channel overload and a blurring of context and identities. It is hard to tell where one project ends and another begins. But maybe this reveals something about our architectural culture?

The cover of the 10x10 series has a tradition of being different. In this case the curious cover pattern seems apposite, as the visual kaleidoscope produced inside, is for me symbolised in the fuzzy blurr of the 'interference pattern' cover on the outside. The texture of the cover too is bizarre. Like the surface of those thankfully long abandoned nylon sheets that ►



► rubbed together in diabolical static, it is uncomfortable to touch. Design here is running away with itself.

I confess I liked and enjoyed the earlier 10x10 volumes. Acting as quick references on projects and architects with interesting insights by critics, but this third volume is struggling with the format. When placed next to the two previous volumes it is also a lot thinner.



10 X 10/3 100 ARCHITECTS, 10 CRITICS (CONTD)

Phaidon



Perhaps there is now a moment to refresh. Certainly more editorial direction and a stronger structure would help frame the critic's role in the process. While magazines are thinning down fast in our current recession, and there is in a sense more time to feature less, a space is opening up to allow us to think, maybe even play

more with our curious compendium world of architecture. ●

Paul Clarke

10x10/3

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Advertising Feature

Cadco becomes Datech Ireland after acquisition by Computer 2000

Cadco, the sole distributor for Autodesk's AEC, geospatial, manufacturing, and media and entertainment products in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, has become Datech Ireland following its acquisition by Computer 2000, the UK and Ireland operation of Tech Data Europe.

Computer 2000 has acquired certain distribution assets of Cadco, which will begin trading as Datech Ireland with immediate effect. The business will continue to operate from its offices in Cork and to trade normally with its Autodesk authorised reseller customers, but will now be able to take advantage of the tremendous logistical and financial resources of its new parent company. Seamus Hurley, formerly Director of Cadco, now becomes Director of Datech Ireland.

Commenting on the acquisition, Hurley states, "This is very positive news for the Autodesk channel and for our customers in Ireland. It enables us to continue providing the high levels of service that we have always delivered to our reseller customer and will provide further security and investment for the business."

Anne O'Leary, Founder and Managing Director of Cadco, says, "Cadco has a proud tradition of delivering Autodesk-based industry solutions, through the Autodesk authorized reseller channel over the past 19 years. A company of engineers, we understand our customers' challenges in delivering better projects with fewer resources. To combine this with the strength of Computer 2000 is a great opportunity for all involved."

David Watts, Director of Datech UK and Ireland, says that for Computer 2000, the acquisition represents a further strategic investment in Ireland and extends the reach of its specialist CAD operation. "In Cadco, we have acquired a business with an excellent reputation and a well-established and loyal customer base. The new Datech



Ireland operation will build on that foundation to provide even higher levels of service, continuity and convenience to Autodesk resellers. We will continue to invest in both our UK and Ireland operations to ensure continued growth and development of Autodesk business and extend the support and services we offer to resellers."

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